

HEBEL — FRIEND OF THE HOUSE*

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Who is Johann Peter Hebel? The question could be answered in a direct way; we could have the story of this man's life narrated to us. We still hear, perhaps, the name *Johann Peter Hebel* here and there in grade school. We learn a few of his poems from our textbook, and vaguely remember one or another of them. Sometimes too, we still hear the name Johann Peter Hebel when we come across one of his calendar-stories.

It is good to know the course of this poet's life, for this is what ordained that the latent poetic source within him should spring forth.

Johann Peter Hebel was born in 1760 in Basel where his parents, of German origin, were in the Swiss Civil Service. The father outlived the birth of the infant Hans Peter by only about a year. At the age of thirteen the boy lost his mother, who came from Hausen in the Wiese Valley. The Wiese Valley goes from the bend in the Rhine near Basel-Lörrach up into the Black Forest to the Feldberg, where the Wiese River springs forth. Hebel has sung of its shape and its course in his great poem "The Wiese."

Later, the young Hebel attended the gymnasium in Karlsruhe. He studied theology at Erlangen, was vicar in the Protestant Markgräflerland and soon after taught at Lörrach. At the age of thirty-one Hebel came again — this time as a teacher — to the gymnasium at Karlsruhe. There he was a professor and school principal, and finally attained high political and religious offices and honors, until he died at the age of sixty-six on September 22, 1826. More than half of Hebel's life was spent far from his homeland.

Indeed, even Karlsruhe was for him far away, for a nearness to the land of his birth and childhood unceasingly and irresistably penetrated the Wiese Valley and beckoned to him. The sap and energy of his native earth and the robustly cheerful attitude of the people there who held him in affection remained alive in Hebel's heart and spirit.

* Translated from *Hebel der Hausfreund* (Pfullingen, Günther Meske, 1957).

The sole dream of his life, to be able to live and work as a village pastor in Markgräflerland, remained, however, unfulfilled. Even so, the magic of his homeland held Hebel in its spell. Out of a longing for his homeland his *Allemanic Poems* took shape. They appeared in 1803. In the preface to them Hebel writes:

The dialect in which these poems are composed might justify their title. This dialect predominates in the corner of the Rhine between the Frick Valley and what was formerly Sundgau, and it is spoken further in many variants down to the Vogesen and the Alps and all across the Black Forest in a large part of the Schwabian region.

We could infer that, because it is written in a dialect, Hebel's poetry speaks only of a narrow world. It is, moreover, widely held that a dialect is a misused and misshapen version of the standard spoken and written language. But this is wrong. Dialect is the mysterious wellspring of every mature language. Whatever is contained in the spirit of a language flows out to us from the dialect.

What is contained in the spirit of a genuine language? It preserves in itself inconspicuous but basic connections with God, with the world, with humans and their works, with their actions and inactions. Contained in the spirit of language is that loftiness, that all-pervasiveness from which each thing has its provenance in such a way that it has a recognized value and bears fruit.

This loftiness and validity comes to life in language. But it also dies with it as soon as language must do without the inflow from its source, which is the dialect. Johann Peter Hebel was well aware of this. And so in a letter written shortly before the publication of the *Allemanic Poems* he wrote that these poems definitely remain within the character and limited viewpoint of a small indigenous group [by which he means the Allemanic people], but that they are at the same time "noble poems" (*Letters*, p. 114).

What is "noble poetry"? It is poetry that has nobility, that is, has a lofty origin from that which inherently endures and whose profusive force is never depleted. Johann Peter Hebel is accordingly not a mere poet of a dialect and a region. Hebel is a poet of worldwide import. And with this we now seem to have an answer to our question, who is Johann Peter Hebel? Yet we still do not have the answer. We would have it only if we also knew why Hebel is the great poet he is. And so we ask again: Who is Johann Peter Hebel?

We are now reaching for an answer to this question when we say: Johann Peter Hebel is the *friend of the house*.

The answer at first sounds odd, if not altogether unintelligible. House-friend — a simple word, yet one of deep and broad meaning. Thanks to a wonderful keenness of ear, Hebel found the name "house-friend" and preserved its stimulating polysemy. Hebel chose this name for the title of the Baden Province Calendar which he edit-

ed. But at the same time he recognized in the title "House-Friend" a word which characterized his own poetic calling.

Hebel was "enthused with the beautiful idea of making the Calendar of the Rhenish House-Friend into a welcome and beneficent publication," as he wrote in 1811 to the "grand ducal, most honorable Ministry" in Karlsruhe; he was pleased "to establish it, if possible, as the exemplary calendar throughout all of Germany and as victor of any possible competition." What Hebel says here about his beautiful idea for a calendar deserves our word-by-word consideration.

The calendar should become a publication (*Erscheinung*). It should constantly illuminate and shed light on the daily life of human beings. The calendar should not merely appear like any other printed matter which, once it has been seen, has already disappeared.

The calendar's appearance (*Erscheinung*) should be "welcome": one which is freely greeted, not one imposed on people by the authorities, as was common at the time.

The calendar's appearance should be "beneficent": proffered with the hope of increasing the reader's well-being and of lessening his woe.

In such fashion the calendar should speak in an "exemplary" way beyond the narrow borders of the province toward all of Germany, for Hebel measures his utterances (*Sagen*) and writing by the highest standards. For this reason alone can he also assess the scope of such an appearance.

Finally, Hebel does not refrain from admitting that everything essential that humans are able to create is a gift of victory in the noble contest — even a calendar. In our day the "newsmagazine" (*Illustrierte*), has superseded the old calendar and destroyed it. The former, the "newsmagazine," scatters, distorts, throws the essential and inessential onto the same uniform level of the superficial, the ephemerally enticing, and the already past, as well. The latter, the calendar, was once able to show the enduring in the inconspicuous and to sustain alert awareness through repeated readings and reflections.

In this way Hebel, apart from this ever having occurred to him, brought the "beautiful idea" of his calendar to shine beyond its own time, ever anew to enchant the thoughts and senses of men. How did this happen? It happened because Hebel became who he was; he became the house-friend. The simple but suggestive word "house-friend" names the basic character of Hebel's basic activity.

To be sure, if one perceives the business of poets to consist exclusively in the production of poems, then one can affirm that Hebel discontinued his poetic activity after publishing the *Alamantic Poems*. But the poems "for friends of rustic nature and customs" are only the beginning of his world-wide poetic achievements. It is only by virtue of the stories and reflections of the Hebel calendar that this

beginning develops and becomes most noble German language. Hebel, who lived in a lucid proximity to language, knew of these riches. According to his own poetic feeling, then, he selected the loveliest pieces from those he had put into the Calendar of the Rhenish House-Friend. He thus refined the treasure into what was most precious, built a little chest for it, and in 1811 bestowed it on the entire German-speaking world as the "*Little Treasury*."

The pondering and creating by which the *Little Treasury* became the literary work that still claims our astonishment came out of that poetic attitude by which we recognize Hebel as the house-friend. But in the *Little Treasury* the *Allemanic Poems* are taken up and preserved in a new way (*aufgehoben*), in the threefold sense of "*aufgehoben*" as conceived by the poet's great contemporary from the Schwabian region, the thinker, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Aufheben means, in the first place: to lift from the floor what lies before one. Yet this sort of *aufheben* remains external as long as it does not define an *aufheben* that means something like: to store up or preserve (*aufbewahren*). Still, this *aufheben* gets strength and lastingness only when it comes from an *aufheben* that suggests: to elevate, to refine, to ennoble, and thus to transform. In such a manner Hebel has "taken up" the *Allemanic Poems* into the *Little Treasury*. The magic of the poems glows out of the *Little Treasury* apart from their actually having been included.

What we commonly see of the world, of human and divine things, gets transformed through poetic sayings (*das dichterische Sagen*) into what is precious and into the excess of what is mysterious. The ennobling that transforms happens by way of an intensified language. But it is an intensification which goes toward simplicity. To intensify language toward simplicity means: to transform everything into the soft glow of the peacefully sounding word. This ennobling speech (*Sagen*) characterizes the poetic activity of Johann Peter Hebel.

Only after we have reflected on this sufficiently do we begin to understand adequately, and enduringly, what respected men such as Emil Strauss, Wilhelm Altwegg, and Wilhelm Zentner have long recognized, namely, that Hebel's letters belong to the unity of his whole poetic work along with the *Allemanic Poems* and the *Little Treasury*.

Only a poet who realized with increasing clarity that his nature was that of the house-friend, and who took up that nature ever more decisively, could have written those letters.

Yet again we ask: who is this, the house-friend? In what manner and to which house is Hebel the friend?

First we think of all the houses in which people of the country and city dwell. All too easily, and often out of a need, we conceive of houses today as the spaces in which everyday human life runs its

course. The house has almost become a mere container for dwelling. Yet the house first becomes a house only through dwelling. Building, whereby the house is constructed, is that which it truly is only when, from the beginning, it remains in tune with that which allows us to dwell, and which in each case awakens and assures ever more original possibilities for dwelling.

If the verb "to dwell" is thought broadly and essentially enough, it designates to us the manner in which man, upon the earth and beneath the sky, completes the passage from birth to death. This passage is multiform and rich in transformations. It nevertheless remains throughout the chief trait of dwelling, of the human sojourn between earth and sky, between birth and death, between joy and pain, between work and word.

If we call this manifold "Between" the *world*, then the world is the house that mortals inhabit. The individual houses, villages, and cities are, for their part, buildings which gather that manifold between within and around themselves. It is buildings which first bring the earth as inhabited landscape into the nearness of man, and at the same time place the nearness of neighborly dwelling beneath the expanse of the sky. Only in the measure that man, as the mortal one, inhabits the house of the world, does he stand in the calling (*Bestimmung*) to build a house for the celestial ones, and a dwelling-place for himself.

The house-friend is friend to the house which the world is. He is attached to the whole wide dwelling of humankind. Yet his attachment is based on a belongingness to the world and its structure, a belongingness that is primordial but commensurate with each age. So we find "Reflections on the World-Edifice" in the *Little Treasury* of the house-friend.

However, the house-friend had not arbitrarily and haphazardly scattered the reflections among the stories. He had carefully considered the treasure of the treasury and ordered it well.

Moreover, the *Little Treasury* even *begins* with the "General Reflections on the World-Edifice." The friend of this house first brings before us "the earth and sun." After that, reflections on the moon follow. Then, in the sequence between the stories about the harmless and the adventuresome, about the upright and cunning actions and enterprises of humans, there sparkle the stars: first, divided into two passages, the planets and comets, and then — intentionally placed at the conclusion — the fixed stars.

Now one could say, and with a certain correctness, that Hebel's "Reflections on the World-Edifice" were only the result of the respect accorded the Enlightenment by his own time. Discoveries in the progressing natural sciences could no longer be ignored in Hebel's time. There was a desire to pass these discoveries on to men as a bet-

ter knowledge of nature. This remark about the Enlightenment is indeed correct, but it misses completely the intention behind the "Reflections on the World-Edifice" made by Johann Peter Hebel, the house-friend. We can perceive his underlying intention only after we know *who* the *real* friend of the house is.

What necessarily surprises us is that it is not Hebel. But then who is it? Hebel himself provides us with the answer, provides it in fact in a remarkable passage of his "Reflections on the World-Edifice." When we attend to what is unique in the passage, we can infer from it a clue which is to be decisive in our attempt to conceive the essence (*das Wesen denken*) of the house-friend from within the framework of the house of the world. The passage in question occurs in the conclusion of the reflection on the moon. It is as follows:

Eighth and final point: What function does the moon in heaven really perform? Answer: Whatever function it is that the earth performs. So much at least is certain: the moon illuminates our nights with soft light reflected from its sun, and the moon watches how boys kiss girls. It is the genuine house-friend and first calendar-maker of our earth and the highest ranking official night watchman when other watchmen are asleep. (*Reflections on the World-Edifice. The Moon. I, 326ff.*)

The real house-friend of the earth is the moon. Who would venture to say, with words few and inevitably too crude, what in this image are the characteristics unique to the house-friend?

Just as the moon in its shining brings a soft light, so Hebel, the earthly house-friend, brings a light through his sayings, and a light that is soft as well. The moon brings light into our nights. But it has not lit the light it brings. The light is only the reflection of the light the moon previously received from the sun whose brilliance shines onto the earth too.

The reflection of the sun is passed on by the moon to the earth in a softened glow; this glow is the poetic image of that saying which is addressed to the house-friend so that he, thus illuminated, passes on what is addressed to *him* to those who dwell on earth with him.

In everything the house-friend says he guards what is essential, to which humans as dwellers are entrusted, yet of which they are all too easily oblivious in their slumbers.

The house-friend, like the highest-ranking official night watchman, the moon, is one who stays awake the whole night through. He watches over the right kind of rest for the dwellers; he watches out for what threatens and disturbs.

As the first calendar-maker, the moon marks the hourly passage of time. So too does poetic saying lead the way for mortals in their passage from birth to death.

The house-friend watches how boys kiss girls. His observing is one of wonderment, not a curious gaping. The house-friend sees to it

that lovers are provided with soft radiance, a moon-like splendor which is neither merely earthly nor only heavenly, but both, yet both as primordially inseparable.

Hebel would have us read the nature of the house-friend from the spectacle of the moon. The phases, stance, and motions of the house-friend are a single uniquely restrained and at once wakeful shining that puts all things in a soft, hardly noticeable light.

This corresponds to what Hebel says about himself as house-friend. Here and there he places "a little golden kernel" (II, 99) into his stories and reflections. "For the Rhenish house-friend walks steadily up and down the Rhine, looks into many a window, and no one sees him; he sits in many a tavern, and no one knows him; he goes an extra mile or two, as is needed, with many a good fellow, and he lets no one on to who he is."

Thus the house-friend thinks many things along with what he says to his devoted reader, and yet he lets the genuine (*das Eigentliche*) go unsaid. As is stated at the end of one of the calendar stories: "in this the house-friend is thinking something, but he doesn't say it." Certainly the house-friend also knows whither his saying speaks, namely, "out to the big marketplace of the world and of life." (II, 172) "At first you don't notice very much how always someone is going and another is coming, until you finally find yourself among completely different people than were there at first."

The house-friend also knows quite well how essentially the life of mortals is determined and carried by the word. In a letter from September 1808 Hebel writes: "A large part of our life is a wandering through words (*Irrgang*) which is pleasantly or unpleasantly confusing, and most of our wars are... word wars" (*Letters*, p. 372).

No wonder the house-friend suggests it is more difficult than we believe through his sayings properly to survive this war of words.

Hebel once wrote to Justinus Kerner (July 20, 1817, *Letters*, p. 565): "You know what it takes to place what has to be said to a certain audience into the truth and clarity of their lives..." and we might add, to remain "inconspicuous and unobtrusive" in doing so (August 10, 1817, *Letters*, p. 567). For this is the manner of the house-friend. Around the same time Hebel again elucidated the name when he wrote (to Justinus Kerner, October 24, 1817, *Letters*, p. 569) that with a name like this "you can surely speak heart-to-heart with the reader and unceremoniously pull his leg."

In the undemonstrative saying, which leaves what it has to say in the unsaid, the friendliness of the house-friend flows out toward his readers. In such saying, the house-friend finds and preserves adverbency to the dwelling of mortals inasmuch as he enters into the house of the world and is nonetheless a guest of the world as if he were not really a guest.

“House-friend” — that is the distantly foreseeing and at once self-disguising name for that which is essential to what we usually call a *poet*.

The poet gathers the world into a saying whose word remains a softly restrained shining in which the world appears as if being caught sight of for the first time. The house-friend wishes neither to instruct nor to educate. He lets the reader have his way so that he may on his own attain that predilection for the essential toward which the house-friend himself inclines in order that he may speak with us.

What sort of conversation does the friend of the house, of the house that is the world, have in mind? Concerning what does the house-friend wish first to speak? Answer: Concerning that with which he himself begins his sayings in the *Little Treasury*. These are the “General Reflections on the World-Edifice.” Hebel concludes this introduction with the sentence: “And so the house-friend will now preach a sermon, first, about the earth and about the sun, after that about the moon, after that about the stars.”

A sermon? Indeed. Yet we must pay close attention to who is preaching here. The house-friend, not the minister. But the poet who preaches is a poor poet — even if we understand the old word “preach” in a thoughtful manner. “To preach” (*Predigen*) is the Latin *praedicare*. It means: to recite something to someone (*etwas vorsegen*), and thus to bring news, and so to make known or renowned (*rühmen*) and thus to let what is to be said appear in its shining. This “preaching” is the essence of poetic saying.

Accordingly, Hebel’s “Reflections on the World-Edifice” are poetic. There is risk in asserting this, for Hebel’s own intention and statements seem to speak against it. Yet Hebel wished, through the “Reflections” mentioned, to introduce his calendar readers to a better knowledge of the world-edifice so as to free them from their neglectful ignorance.

The first page of the *Little Treasury* begins with the following sentences (I, 264):

Everything’s fine for the gentle reader when he’s sitting home among familiar mountains and trees with his family and friends, or when he’s having a beer in the local tavern, and he doesn’t give it a single further thought. But when the sun rises early in its quiet majesty, he knows not whence it comes; and evenings, when it goes down, he knows not whither it goes and where it hides its light throughout the night and on which secret pathway it again finds its way to the mountains of dawn. Or when the moon goes around pale and thin one time, and round and full another, again he knows not how this comes about, and when he looks up into a sky full of stars, and the one twinkles more beautifully and joyfully than the other, he believes they are all there for his sake. And yet he really doesn’t know quite what they want. Good friend, it is not commendable to see something all one’s days and never ask what it means.

The house-friend wants to incline his readers to ponder what manifests itself in the processes and conditions of nature permeating our inhabited world. He therefore also presents nature to his readers as it is represented by the "Physicists and astronomers" of modern natural science, and, foremost among these, by the "goodly Copernicus": namely, in numbers, diagrams, and laws. We deliberately say: the house-friend *also* shows nature in its scientific calculability. He does not, however, lose himself in this conception of nature. Indeed, the house-friend directs the eye toward nature in its calculability, but at the same time he brings it as thus represented back into the *simple naturalness* (*die Natürlichkeit*) of nature. This naturalness of nature is essentially, and hence historically as well, far more ancient than nature in the sense of an object of modern natural science. The naturalness of nature never grows directly out of nature itself; rather, it is caught sight of expressly in that to which the ancient Greek thinkers once gave the name "*physis*": the rising and receding of all that is present in its presencing and absencing. The natural in nature is that rising and setting of the sun, of the moon, of the stars, which directly addresses humans as they dwell, by commending to them the mysteriousness of the world. Although with scientific enlightenment about the world-edifice the sun comes to be thought in a Copernican manner, according to two of Hebel's poems it nonetheless remains — within natural nature — that "uncommon woman" from whom "all light and warmth comes," "whom everything begs for a blessing" and "nonetheless remains so generous and friendly."

Does Hebel transform the sun into a peasant woman here, or does the simplicity of such a woman and all mankind first come to light when the sun and the stars of natural nature shine upon us in their calm splendor?

Indeed, Goethe in his review of Hebel's *Allemanic Poems* writes: "The author transforms the objects of nature into peasants, and in the most naive and gracious manner, thoroughly countrifies the universe; so that the landscape, where one continually catches sight of the peasant anyway, seems to merge into one with him in our heightened and exhilarated imagination (*Phantasie*)."

Hebel countrifies the universe. This judgment sounds harsh, and yet is intended to be a friendly one. It even touches precisely upon a *question* which continually stirred the later thought and poetry of Goethe.

What is it, then, that we as well, and all the more so we of today, must appreciate as worthy of urgent questioning?

What is worthy of question is that which has meanwhile intensified into something immeasurable and opaque, sweeping our age away to we know not where.

What is worthy of question is that for which we today do not yet

even know the right name: that the technologically dominable nature of science, and the natural nature of the accustomed, and likewise historically determined dwelling of man, are disengaged from one another as two alien realms, and with a constant acceleration are racing even further apart.

What is worthy of question is that the calculability of nature is offered as the sole key to the mystery of the world.

What is worthy of question is that calculable nature, as the supposedly true world, seizes upon every reflection and aspiration of man, changing and hardening human ideation into a merely calculative thinking.

What is worthy of question is that natural nature is degraded into the nullity of a mere product of our fancy (*eines Phantasiegebildes*), and no longer even addresses the poets.

What is worthy of question is that poetry itself is no longer able to be an exemplary form of truth.

All of this may also be said as follows: We are errant today in a world which is a house without a friend, that is, which lacks that house-friend who in equal manner and with equal force is inclined toward both the technologically constructed world-edifice *and* the world as the house for a more original dwelling. Missing is that friend of the house who is able to re-entrust the calculability and technology of nature to the open mystery of a newly experienced naturalness of nature.

This house-friend, to be sure, countrifies the universe. But this countrifying has the character of that building which thinks in the direction of a more original dwelling of man.

Needed for this are builders who know that through atomic energy man does not live, but rather perishes at best; that is, man must also lose himself (*sein Wesen*) even when atomic energy is used only for peaceful purposes, and when these purposes alone remain exemplary for his every goal and calling. In contrast to this, genuine builders consider such mere survival to be no real dwelling at all. For man "dwells," *if* he dwells, in the words of Hölderlin, "poetically . . . upon this earth."

Johann Peter Hebel is the poet in the form of the house-friend. To be sure, we of today can no longer return to the world experienced by Hebel a hundred and fifty years ago, neither to its intact rusticity, nor to its limited knowledge of nature.

We can, however, notice that, and how, what is poetic in the dwelling of man needs the poet who is friend in a lofty and wide-ranging sense: friend to the house of the world.

We can look ahead, to where Johann Peter Hebel beckons when he thinks of the poet as the house-friend who brings to language the house of the world for the dwelling of man.

“To bring to language” — we use this phrase commonly to express something being posed for discussion and to be dealt with. Yet if we consider the phrase “bring to language” thoughtfully, with regard to the bearing of its words, it acquires a deeper sense. Then “to bring to language” means: to raise what was formerly unspoken, what was never before said, initially to word, and through saying to let appear what has till now been concealed. If we thoughtfully consider the character of saying in this regard, it becomes apparent that language shelters within itself the treasure of everything essential.

To this day, few have quite fathomed what is concealed in Johann Peter Hebel’s *Little Treasury*. Hebel’s meditations and stories speak in the simplest, the clearest, at the same time in the most enchanting and thoughtful German language ever written. The language of Hebel’s *Little Treasury* remains the standard of learning for those preparing to speak or write that language in an exemplary way.

In what lies the mystery of Hebel’s language? Not in any pretentious will to have a style, nor in any intention to write in the most popular manner possible. The mystery of the language of the *Little Treasury* lies in the fact that Hebel was able to embody the language of the Allemanic dialect in the standard written language. In this manner, the poet allows the written language to resonate as pure echo of the riches of the dialect.

Do we still hear the language of the *Little Treasury*? Does our language, then, still concern us at all, so that we hearken to it? Or is our own language ebbing away from us? Indeed it is. What was once spoken in our language, its inexhaustible antiquity, sinks more and more into an oblivion. What is happening here?

Whenever and however man speaks, he speaks only so long as he always already gives ear to language. Likewise, even the mishearing of language is still a kind of hearing. Man speaks from within that language to which his essence is commended. We call this language “the mother tongue.”

With regard to the language that has grown historically — that it is the mother tongue — we may say: *It is language, not man, which genuinely speaks. Man speaks only to the extent that he in each case co-responds to language.*

In the present age, owing to the haste and commonplaceness of everyday talking and writing, another relation to language predominates ever more decisively. That is to say, just as we take everything with which we deal from day to day to be an instrument, we take language too to be an instrument, indeed *the* instrument for communication and information.

This notion of language is so familiar to us that we scarcely notice its uncanny power. But in the meantime, what is uncanny comes to light more distinctly. Today the notion of language as an instrument

of information is driven to extremes. We are no doubt acquainted with this process, yet we fail to consider what it means. We know that, in connection with the construction of electronic brains, not only calculating machines but also thinking and translating machines are now being built. Yet all calculating, in both the narrower and the broader sense, all thinking and translating, move in the element of language. By means of those machines just mentioned, the *language machine* has become an actuality.

The language machine, in the sense of the technical complex of calculating and translating machines, is different from the speaking machine. We are acquainted with the latter in the form of an apparatus which records and reproduces our speaking, and consequently does not yet intrude into the speaking of language itself.

On the contrary, the language machine regulates and adjusts from the beginning the mode of our possible usage of language through mechanical energies and functions. The language machine is — and above all, is still becoming — one manner in which modern technology controls the mode and the world of language as such.

Meanwhile, the impression is still maintained that man is the master of the language machine. But the truth of the matter might well be that the language machine takes language into its management, and thus masters the essence of man.

The relation of man to language is in the midst of a transformation the consequences of which we have not yet weighed. Nor can the course of this transformation be directly halted. Moreover, it proceeds in the most profound silence.

It must certainly be granted that in everyday living language appears as a means for communication, and it is as such a means that it is employed in the commonplace relationships of life. There are, however, relationships other than the commonplace. Goethe calls these other relationships the "deeper" ones, and says of language:

"In ordinary life, we make do with impoverished language because we only signify superficial relationships. As soon as the talk is of deeper relations, another language at once enters in — the poetic."

Johann Peter Hebel named these deeper relations when he once wrote: "We are plants which — whether we care to admit it to ourselves or not — must ascend with our roots in the earth, in order to bloom in the ether and bear fruit."

The earth — this word in Hebel's sentence designates all that which as visible, audible, or palpable supports and surrounds us, kindles and calms us: the sensuous.

The ether (the sky) — this word in Hebel's sentence designates all we perceive, but not with our sense-organs — the non-sensuous, sense (*Sinn*), spirit.

But the pathway (Weg und Steg) between the depths of the per-

fectly sensuous and the heights of the intrepidly spiritual is language.

To what extent? A word of language sounds and resounds in the voice, is clear and bright in the typeface. Voice and script are indeed sensuous, yet always within them a meaning (*Sinn*) is told and appears. As sensuous meaning, the word traverses the expanse of the leeway between earth and sky. Language holds open the realm in which man, upon the earth and beneath the sky, inhabits the house of the world.

The poet, Johann Peter Hebel, lucidly wanders (*wandert hellen Sinnes*) upon pathways we can experience as language. We can do so, if we seek the friendship of the one who, as a poet, is himself friend to the house of the world —

Johann Peter Hebel: friend of the house.